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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the responsibilities of the individual who acts as liaison between a teaching center and the university teacher preparation program. A teaching center is comprised of a high school and its feeder schools, where preservice students may experience hands-on interaction in the classroom prior to student teaching. The liaison administers the teaching center with the major responsibilities of coordinating the placements of the interns with the building coordinators in the various schools and of acting as mediator between the schools and the university. A description of the background and objectives of the program is given. A discussion of the operation of the teaching center program includes a description of how the program is operated and administered, the role of the governance board, the responsibilities for attending to the needs of the student interns, and intern activities and rotation between schools. The role of the "Placement Teacher" (the teacher in a teaching center who has accepted an intern) is also described. The characteristics and educational philosophy of the liaison are discussed. (JD)

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THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A TEACHING CENTER: THE SUCCESSFUL APPROACH

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"THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A TEACHING CENTER:

THE SUCCESSFUL APPROACH"

INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The development of a teaching center takes many years of concentration and leadership ability. At Arizona State University, Dr. John Bell was instrumental in developing and supporting the teaching center. Dr. Bell came to Arizona State University in 1965 and was the department chair in secondary education for 11 years. During this period of time and because of his position, he was able to organize and implement teaching centers. He saw a need for teachers to actually practice their skills before student teaching. His goal and philosophy consisted of producing the best teacher possible in the college of education at ASU. In the early 1970's,

he placed students in secondary education at a site school in Phoenix. These students were not student teachers, but were preparing to be student teachers. This experience was successful for both the students and the teachers in the Phoenix Union School District. Dr. Bell continued to work with this program until the College of Education had some major curriculum changes in the early 1980's.

With Dr. Bell's skill and knowledge in placing students in a public school setting, the actual teaching center at ASU was developed. It is necessary to emphasize the fact that these teaching centers would not have progressed, without Dr. Bell's conscientious effort that he put forth for all those prior years. He worked with one or two school districts to develop this program. Certainly, this was a trial and error program until some specific structure could be implemented. From the first experimental teaching center until now, ASU has 17 teaching centers. His ideas and philosophy made a tremendous positive impact with the Teacher Preparation Program. Dr. Bell had a long term goal that would facilitate both the students and the public schools.

There are definitely advantages for both the students and the teaching centers. The students are able to observe and participate in a live setting. An advantage for the school district is that they are aware of the type of student the College of Education is producing. They can observe the current market for teachers.

LIAISON

My position is titled, Liaison, and I actually administer the teaching center. My educational background consists of a counseling degree, administrative certificate, certificates in Reality Therapy, Women's Studies and a Ph.D. in Social and Philosophical Foundations of Secondary Education. The reason I mention this, is because a liaison needs to be prepared to solve many problems not only in academic areas but also in inter and intrapersonal relationships. It is necessary to totally understand the student, his/her grades and needs. This understanding is an essential element while working with the students and their placements. It is also necessary to understand the school faculty and administrators.

The responsibilities of the liaison incorporates the ability to know what placement the student needs and wants and then to actually place the student in that setting. It is necessary that the students have a positive and successful experience each semester. If problems arise, it is the responsibility of the liaison to solve the problem. This usually is done through a conference or simple discussion. Some students are apprehensive and need extra support during their placements. Other students master the skill of interning very easily. In either case, the liaison needs to be there to listen and encourage students.

VISITING THE SCHOOLS

An important public relations requisite for the liaison is to visit each school. The purpose of these visits are numerous. First of all, the liaison will learn more about the operation and administration of each school. Secondly, it gives the liaison an opportunity to know the building coordinator better and in his/her own setting. Thirdly, it affords the liaison an opportunity to become better acquainted with the faculty and discuss any problems concerning the interns or program.

If the liaison makes "good-will" visits to the school, a certain amount of mystic about the program and the university is dissolved. An important factor for the liaison to remember - is that she/he is going there for a visit, not to correct or change anything. This concept is very important because many times they view someone from the university as an authority figure. This concept must be dispelled and university faculty must be seen as facilitators and friends.

Of course if a problem does erupt, then the liaison is required to discuss and resolve it. It really helps if the schools know your philosophy and general concerns in a less formal situation. Who knows, you may be offered a free lunch.

THE TEACHING CENTER

There are 17 teaching centers in the College of Education at ASU. I am responsible for two teaching centers. Each teaching center has definite characteristics - No two teaching centers are ever alike. Each teaching center consists of the high, middle/or junior high schools and elementary schools. Normally, these are the schools that feed into the high school.

At each school, one person is distinguished as the building coordinator. This person could be the Principal, Assistant Principal or a faculty member. They are referred to as a contact person. This building coordinator does the actual placing of the interns. They decide which teacher will have an intern and they report that information to me on what is called a summary sheet.

Most high schools have department chairs who place the interns and then report that information to me.

The criteria for placement teachers having an intern is determined by the principal. However, it is stipulated that student teachers be placed with a master tenure teacher. This translates to be a teacher who the principal feels is qualified and has taught for a minimum of 3 full school years. Teachers are selected because they have outstanding qualities that the intern would like to emulate. Also, the teacher must be willing to work

with and be a role model for the interns. Because of these positive experiences, teachers are always anxious to have interns.

THE PROGRESSION OF INTERNS

The Professional Teacher Preparation Program (PTPP) consists of two academic years. Students must be of junior standing to qualify for acceptance. The actual hours of placement in the school is progressive and is determined by the students major. The hours listed below are the mininum hours required for the internship.

All semester I students are required to participate 4 clock hours per week in a school setting.

All semester II students are required to participate 6 clock hours per week.

All semester III students in Elementary Education are required to participate 6 clock hours per week in a school setting.

Semester III Secondary Education majors are required to participate 8 hours per week.

Semester III Special Education majors are required to spend 15 hours per week - they can also split their hours to 7 1/2 per

week for the two semesters. Many of our interns choose to split the 3rd block.

Semester IV Student Teachers are required to spend all day at their school site for a 15 week period.

ROTATION POLICIES

In an effort to best serve the interns, they are placed in a different school, grade level and with a different teacher each semester.

The purpose of rotating the interns is to give them the best experience possible. Because most of these students do not know the grade level they want to eventually teach, they are able to observe several grade levels. Rotating the interns to different schools, also gives them an opportunity to understand the different styles of administration. Although, the students can be in the same school district, the methods of administration do change. This depends on the socio-economics of the enrollment area, curriculum, faculty and parents. Certainly these are all factors that must be taken into consideration in the PTP Program. In both of my teaching centers, there are several female administrators.

It is important that the interns can see both sexes as role-models for them.

The first semester students I take the liberty of placing. After that semester, I allow the students to choose where they would like to be for the following semester. I have designed a form for them to fill out. This form must be returned to me by a designated date. If the form is not returned, then I place the student. This system works very well and it provides me with an additional record for my students.

ACTIVITIES

While the students are at their school sites, they are required to participate in various activities. The PTP Program has distinguished the observation activities in a packet known as the Field Experience Activities Inventory. These activities are progressive throughout the semester and culminate in the student teaching process. These experiences, that the interns have in the school setting, enables them to know what teaching is all about. The classroom theory can be vague until the interns have the opportunity to practice their skills in an actual setting. This

realization focuses on the original idea that Dr. Bell had shortly after he arrived at Arizona State University. His belief that interns need a school site where they will be supervised by professional teachers during the actual school day had materialized.

Students purchase a packet that consists of evaluations for mid-term and for the final. Thus the interns are very much aware of what their expectations are while observing.

ORIENTATION MEETINGS

How do students learn about their specific requirements in a teaching center? It is necessary to meet with the students in a group and discuss specific requirements. This is accomplished through orientation meetings. Interns need to be told of the requirements so they can present themselves in a professional manner. We cannot assume that the interns know how to behave, dress and interact without having been told. Giving students this proper information is really critical. The college of education has raised its standards for teachers in the program and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on looking and acting properly as

a teacher. The principals support the "professional appearance" philosophy. It is, also, necessary for the College of Education to be proud of our future teachers.

THE GOVERNANCE BOARD MEETING

Each center is awarded $500.00 for participating in the PTP Program. The dispersal of this remuneration money is decided at the Governance Board Meeting. Usually each participating school receives X amount of the total share.

Other issues are discussed at this major meeting. Some teaching centers offer in-service programs to the interns. Questions concerning the placement and rotation of students are discussed.

Usually the Governing Board decides to rotate students each semester to a different school, grade level and teacher.

It is the purpose of the Governing Board to discuss these issues and agree on the function and procedures of each placement. It is very, very necessary to cooperate totally with these administrators to have a well functioning center. The main goal is to concentrate on happiness and success so the school will be

willing to have our students on their campuses. Thus far they are happy.

RAP SESSION

I offer my interns an opportunity to discuss problems and ask questions in a group that I have called a "RAP SESSION". My students really appreciate this opportunity to discuss the program. The semester I students are enhanced because they receive information from semester II, III and IV students. The purpose of this Rap Session is to invite questions and share answers. Remember, my back ground is in counseling, and I find it necessary to resolve all problems immediately. Students are able to meet other students and not feel peculiar about their feelings or strange ideas. They soon realize that their feelings and concerns are very normal.

Additional Suggestions

In my center, I find it is necessary to communicate on a monthly basis with my interns. I send out memorandums to all of

my interns outlining the required meeting dates, due dates for mid-terms and finals. I make it a point to address their progress and I encourage them to see me, if they have any problems. I try to interject some humor, and basically, I want them to know that I am available to help them in any way.

These memo's appear to be successful. On several occasions, students will tell me that they missed my memo and come to my office to ask for one. Another valid aspect of the memo is that on several occasions, students told me that they had a problem but did not know who to contact. The memo says in essence, "I'm here to help you - I care." This feeling is needed at all levels from someone.

My secretary, Judy, selects different colored paper for my memos. This is a very keen idea because the students then look for the colored memo of the month. Without her help and understanding, I do not believe the memos would be as successful. Judy is a wonderful typist and I believe this factor is an essential element in any correspondence. She <u>always</u> puts the extra effort into her work to make it look professional and very neat. She is deserving of a "big thank you".

Conclusion

Remember that each teaching center has its own characteristics, as a liaison, you need to keep everybody happy. Is that too great a task? No - Not if you work at it. Tell your building coordinators and faculty how great they are and that the program would not be successful without them.

Be willing to listen and encourage your interns to continue in the program when they feel low or blue. Tomorrow is another day and things will be better. Allow the students to choose grade levels, schools and teachers whenever possible. Treat the students as though they are important, do not dictate to them. They have made a wise choice and it is necessary to support and guide their decisions.

Be available to listen to both sides when a conflict arises. Some disputes are bound to occur. Realize this and deal with it constructively.

Smile - let everyone know you enjoy what you are doing.

REFLECTIONS

The PTP Program is very successful in the College of Education at ASU. I attribute this to the fact that the centers started out with a purpose. As Dr. Bell stated "to prepare our students to be

the best teachers possible". Although, the teaching centers are relatively young, they are, indeed, a collaborative effect for the people involved: the students, the placement teacher, the liaison, the building coordinator and the director. It is my sincere feeling, that the reason my centers function as well as they do is because of the director, Dr. Gary Anderson. He has allowed me to be innovative in establishing and organizing my meeting dates, Rap Sessions, and in sending memorandums to my interns. This autonony allows me to try new techniques, without any prescribed consequences. Can one honestly teach someone else how to administer a teaching center? I think not. It is something that arises out of the needs of the students, placement teachers and building coordinators. You have to like dealing with students at different levels and you need to anticipate what students want. You need to be a step ahead of them. A sincere interest in the students' well-being is essential. This is also necessary for your building coordinators. The bottom line - you must like being a liaison.

I remind my interns, several times throughout the semester, to write "thank-you" notes to their placement teachers and building coordinators. It is necessary for the interns to show their appreciation to these kind faculty who have guided them during the semester. I feel that this type of courtesy is another example of being professional.

Terminology in the Professional

Teacher Preparation Program

PTPP

Teaching Center

A high school and feeder schools that have been distinguished as a teaching center because of an agreement with the district office. This site consists of one high school, middle or junior schools and several elementary schools. This is where the interns experience hands-on interaction.

Building Coordinator

An administrator or teacher who works with the ASU Liaison and the placement teacher in placing the intern at that school. They

help establish policies for the functioning of that specific teaching center.

Governance Board

The Governance Board consists of all the Building Coordinators and the Liaison. The function of this board is to meet regularly and determine how the center shall function. They set policies on "how to place the students" and discuss problems that occur. It is helpful to have an administrator from the district office to generate and implement ideas.

Liaison

The liaison is the administrator of the teaching center. They coordinate the placements of the interns with the Building Coordinator to make certain that each student is placed properly. They also act as mediators between the schools and ASU if a problem arises with the intern. Good communication skills are essential.

Interns

Students who are of at least junior standing and have been admitted to the PTP Program with a desire to be a teacher. They are divided into 4 categories: semester I, semester II, semester III and semester IV, student teachers. They participate in the teaching center placement program.

Placement Teacher

The teacher in a teaching center who has accepted an intern for that semester. They are selected by the building coordinator and mirror a role model image; someone the interns would like to emulate. A master teacher.

Student Teacher

A semester IV intern who has successfully completed all the course work and is ready to prepare for the actual teaching experience.